

Prayer of the Week:

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, Proper Nineteen)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Love

Galatians 5:22-23 (NRSV)

September 13th, 2020

Intro

In a nation deeply divided, what we need now more than ever is the clear evidence of God's Spirit in our lives.

As Christians, how do we go about the process of discernment? How can we know truth when sides are so convinced they are correct? How are we to act in the midst of such division?

At the risk of sounding too simplistic....we look at the fruit.

Jesus says: *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.*

-Matthew 7:15-16a

Over the next several weeks, we are going to explore the fruit of the Spirit that are listed in Galatians 5.

We are doing this first to help us with discernment and introspection.

“Fruit” Not “Works”

Notice that the scriptures don’t call these characteristics “works” or “acts” of righteousness.

They are fruit of the Spirit.

In other words, these aren’t things we strive for, they are things that blossom in us.

The fruit of the Spirit is the character of God made manifest in the believer!

Love

Paul begins with love because all of the other fruit are expressions of this core characteristic.



“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”

-Galatians 5:6b

Paul was teaching this truth in a context where Jewish & Gentile believers were deeply divided over what it meant to follow Christ.

He essentially says as you argue and debate over what it means to work out your faith, the way to actually work out your faith is to love.

In other words, the WAY we argue and debate is probably more important than WHAT we are debating!

Truth is perfect, but our understanding of truth is not.

Christians often say, “I want my life to be so different that people notice.” What we mean is that we want our faith to be visible to other people.

Your faith is made visible by the way you love.

Christos Collective

As a faith community, we believe in the power of the arts to speak truth, inspire our hearts, and shape the world.

During this series, we are partnering with Christos Collective. Christos Collective is a collection of Christian artists seeking to reclaim God’s voice in art to transform and renew minds. This partnership is made possible by Melissa Pape, a member of our congregation and Christos Collective.

A few years ago, they had nine artists work collectively on nine works of art, each representing a fruit of the spirit from Galatians 5:22-23.

Look at the painting on love. Notice the flame in the middle that represents the Spirit. People of all different color, language, and nation are connected to one another, through the Spirit.

What a wonderful picture of this passage of scripture! Love is the fruit of the Spirit of which all the others are an expression. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Let’s cultivate this in one another.